

Chesterfield County, Virginia

## How to Locate and Stop Costly Water Leaks



Water leaks are a waste of a valuable resource: pure, clean drinking water. An undetected leak may result in a costly utility bill.



Department of Utilities  
804-748-1291

Chesterfield County's Department of Utilities is responsible for repairing leaks in the meter box and on the street side of the meter box. When a customer connects to the public water system, a plumber makes a connection to the meter on the house side of the meter box. Leaks at the plumber's connection, the service line to the house and in all other house plumbing are the customer's responsibility to repair.



## Signs of a water leak

Water standing in a yard, water in or around a meter box, or an unusually high bill may indicate a water leak.

## Three steps to find a leak

1. Check the water meter.
2. Determine if the leak is in the home or underground.
3. Locate the leak in the home.

## Check the water meter

The first step in checking the water meter is to make sure no water is being used in the home. If a toilet is being flushed, or a washing machine or dishwasher is being used, this test will not work.

Remove the cover on the meter box and observe the center sweep hand located on the meter register. When water is passing through the meter, the sweep hand will rotate in a clockwise direction. One complete revolution of the sweep hand equals 1 cubic foot of water, or approximately 7.5 gallons. The dial face is divided into

100 increments around the outer edge. Record the location of the sweep hand. Wait 15 minutes and check the sweep hand again. A small leak may take several minutes for the sweep hand to noticeably move. If the sweep hand has not moved, there probably is not a leak.

Newer meters are equipped with leak detectors. This is a red triangle on the register face that will rotate when water is passing through the meter. Movement of the leak detector is more noticeable than the sweep hand when small amounts of water pass through the meter. If either the sweep-hand or leak-detector dials are moving, with no apparent usage of water in the house, you may have a leak.

## Determine if the leak is in the home or underground

Locate the master valve. The master valve is usually located under the house in the crawl space or in a basement or utility room. Closing the master valve shuts off the water entering the house.

Close the master valve and check the meter. Typically, if the meter has stopped registering, the leak is somewhere in the house. If the meter continues to register with the valve closed, the leak is probably underground between the meter box and the master valve.

## Locate leaks inside the home

Faucets, toilets and outside taps usually have an isolation valve located near the fixture. By closing this valve and observing the meter, the customer can isolate or identify the possible sources of leaks.

### Faucets

A faucet leak is usually due to old or broken interior parts of the valve. In most cases, the entire fixture does not need to be replaced. Replacement washers and valves, available at a local hardware store, may solve this problem.



### Toilets

A toilet leak is the most overlooked type of water leak because it is not obvious. Unlike a faucet or spigot leak, a toilet leak cannot be seen. Toilet leaks typically result in a greater waste of water at a higher rate than any other type of leak. To check for toilet leaks, remove the top from the toilet tank and listen for running water. If water is flowing into the overflow tube in the tank, the valve may not be cutting off completely. Adjust the cutoff point or replace the valve. If the flapper valve that closes after the toilet is flushed fails to close, or doesn't close completely, water will leak from

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